



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CAN THE COLLECTING INSTINCT BE UTILIZED IN TEACHING?

ELIZABETH HOWE

The collecting instinct seems to arise in the majority of children; comparatively few have never collected. Is it not possible, since this habit seems to be almost universal, to develop this instinct along certain lines in schools?

Dr. G. Stanley Hall, Professor Earl Barnes, and Mrs. C. F. Burk¹ have made investigations on the collecting instinct of children, and have found it to be very common. So far as known, the public schools as yet have not recognized the value of this instinct. My investigation was along the same line as that of the above writers, and the results in the main agree.

Dr. Hall says: "The habit could be put to great advantage; that is, to collect scraps on literature, geology, etc. Children gather blindly, with no knowledge of the geography of the country from which the stamps come, nor the species of birds which lay the different eggs collected." With the knowledge confronting us that this instinct does commonly exist, two questions arise: first, What are the principal varieties of this collecting instinct? and, second, What varieties can be utilized to advantage? Investigators have tried to solve the first by having a group of children write answers to a number of questions; but, of course, there is one great fault to be found with the questionnaire method, because when a teacher asks questions of her pupils, there is a tendency for them to give what they think the teacher wants. This was so to some extent in the papers from which I got my data.

The ideal method for finding out the individual instincts would be to take each child separately, and find out from him

¹ G. S. Hall, *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. I, p. 234; Earl Barnes, *Studies in Education*, Vol. II, p. 144; C. F. Burk, *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. VII, p. 179.

in an unguarded moment the things he collected and the reason for doing so. This method would take time and trouble, which probably could not be given by the average school-teacher.

Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the teacher who had such information would have an insight into the children's inner life which she would hardly be able to get in any other way. It would bring out some of the desires of a child which the teacher could encourage or check.

The following list of questions was asked of 135 pupils, from eleven to seventeen years old, belonging to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of a school situated in a very much congested district of Chicago:²

1. Tell all the things you have collected.
2. How old were you when you began?
3. Have you stopped? If so, how old were you at that time?
4. Why did you begin?
5. If discontinued, why have you done so?
6. Tell the number in each collection.
7. Did you arrange the things collected? If so, how?

Of the 135 there were 17 who did not understand the meaning of the word "collection" and fourteen who had made none. This leaves 104 papers from which I have drawn my conclusions. Of this 104, 52 were boys and 52 were girls. Forty-six different things were collected by boys and 45 by girls. The interests of the girls as a whole seemed more trivial than that of the boys, although this might not be true if a larger number were considered.

The following is a list of the things collected:

BOYS			
Books	20	Buttons	2
Stamps	8	Papers	2
Money	7	Electrical things	2
Pictures	5	Pins	2
Pencils	4	Pens	2
Old and foreign money	4	Cord	
Stones	3	Coal with iron in it	
Marbles	3	Blank checks	
Railroad folders and time-tables ..	5	Tools	
Photographs	2	Brushes	
		Magazines	

² Through the kind interest of Mr. Joseph A. Bache.

Bibles	School papers	3
Music-books	Shells	3
Outcast animals	Spoons	2
Bats	Flowers	2
Balls	Handkerchiefs	2
Footballs	Old and foreign money	2
Drawing-paper	Cups and saucers	2
Paints	Songs	2
Neckties	Drawings	2
Scarf-pins	Rags	
Tickets	Marbles	
Tops	Arithmetics	
Twigs and branches	Magazines	
Shoe-laces	Receipts	
Coupons	Railroad maps	
Spelling-papers	Plates	
Boxes	Calling-cards	
Rulers	Sunday-school papers	
Notes	Sheet music from Sunday <i>American</i>	
Seeds	Turfs from Ireland	
Flag buttons	Paper	
Departments of government	Chalk	
Articles made in manual training	Pens	
	Pencils	
	Time-tables	
	Birds' wings	
	Berries	
	Corn	
	Stones	
	Tubs	
	Desks	
	Leaves	
	Pocket-books	
	Fancy-work	
	Music	

GIRLS	
Books	19
Pictures	11
Stamps	7
Postal cards	5
Dolls	5
Ribbons	4
Notes	4
Money	4
Photographs	4
Souvenirs	3

Collections of books were made more often than any other thing. This is true both of the boys and of the girls. In Dr. Stanley Hall's investigation he found that stamps were collected more often than anything else; in that of Earl Barnes, buttons and picture cards; in that of Mrs. Burk, nature interest ranks the highest. These observations seem to show that the things which interest children most are different in different localities. As Mrs. Burk's children all live in California, where flowers and

plants are more common than here, it is barely possible that this would explain their preference for nature.

The reasons for collecting are interesting. Things were collected, in the majority of cases, without any thought of value, but apparently, first, simply to own something, and, second, to increase the quantity of that something. Nine wanted to see how many they could get; eight collected for remembrance; eight, because it was right or they were told to do so; seven collected books because they wanted to read; six collected, but did not know why; three, to see how much money they could save (not for its value at first). The other reasons stated were "amusement," "curiosity," "interested," "ornamental," "useful," and some "because they liked to do so." One boy collected bats and balls because as he said: "I got crazy over playing ball;" another collected electrical apparatus because he thought it would be good as a trade. Another boy began to collect things so as to have something to leave to his brothers and sisters.

Earl Barnes states that he found emulation to be the reason given for collecting in 22 out of 128 cases; and a curious thing is that not one of the children in the group I had gave evidence of having had emulation or imitation as a motive. None said anything about color or beauty, but quantity was their special aim.

In Dr. Hall's paper he gives "marbles" as one of the first on the list, while comparatively few of my children collected them. One girl has 579 and is still collecting them. She is now sixteen years old and started her collection at the age of ten.

Out of the 104 who made collections, 77 are still collecting; 27 have stopped. Twenty-seven commenced to collect at the age of ten years, 36 after they were ten and 41 before they were ten. There were a few who started as early as the fifth year. Forty-eight of the children are now fourteen or over, and 56 are under fourteen years. Some of these who are now collecting are fifteen and sixteen.

Of the 52 girls who made collections, 30 had schemes of arrangement, and 22 did not. One arranged her postal cards according to the months, to see how many she received in each month; one held each kind of examination papers together with a rubber band; another put books on a shelf according to the men and women who wrote them; and another put her leaves and flowers in a book made for that purpose.

Twenty-four boys made no arrangement, and 28 did. The one who collected buttons arranged them in the form of a crescent and hung them on the wall. The stamps of one boy were arranged in a book according to their value; another arranged them in an album according to the country to which they belonged; another one put his United States stamps in packages of 100 each, and the foreign ones he pasted in a book. One boy arranged petrified animals according to the family in which they belonged; another arranged his books by numbering them with a paper and putting them in a bookstand. A considerable number stated that they had arranged their collections so that they could find them.

This investigation has shown that there were almost as many different kinds of things collected as there were children to collect them. It might seem at first that, on account of this great diversity of interest, it would be almost a hopeless task for a teacher to try to direct these young ideas into proper channels. On further study, however, it will be noted that many of the things collected can easily be divided into a few groups. For example, we could put under the head of "educational" the collections of books, minerals, electrical apparatus, paints, leaves, branches, flowers, etc.; under the head of "remunerative," money, possibly coupons and stamps, etc.; under "aesthetic," pictures, neckties, scarf-pins, souvenirs, shells, fancy-work, etc.

This paper has been written with a view to raising the question as to how the collecting instinct can be utilized in teaching. But first of all it is very desirable to learn of instances in which it has already been utilized. The writer would be grateful for answers to the following questions:

1. Have you ever made any use of the collecting instinct of children in your teaching?
2. What methods of enlisting and developing the instinct were used.
3. What results were obtained?

Answers to these questions may be sent to

ELIZABETH HOWE,
Care of *Elementary School Teacher*,
School of Education.